

October 2022 Pest Management Newsletter

Name that Weed!

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This month's Weed Science contest is Name that Weed!

This weed species (Picture 1, 2, and 3) is an erect, annual herb and is a part of the Boraginaceae (forget-me-not) family. It is found primarily in waste areas and ditchbanks, especially in wet soils near rivers and lakes (Pictures 1 and 2 were actually taken next to the Mississippi River in Desha County, AR). Although not common in Arkansas, it has also been known to be a problematic weed in rice paddies in other parts of the world such as India and southeast Asia. In the Philippines, this plant has been used for medicinal purposes including treating wounds, skin ulcers, and boils. Juice extracted from the plant has also been utilized as an eye drop to treat pink eye.

This plant produces alternating, velvety broad green leaves that are up to 6 inches long and 4 inches wide (Picture 1). This weed species produces an unbranched, curved to twisting flower head (Picture 2). This flower head produces small, pale blue to purple flowers with orange centers. Seeds (Picture 3) formed on this flower head can mature at various stages, resulting in seed production for extended periods of time increasing the soil seedbank if not managed early. Additionally, this plant has the ability to grow in partially flooded environments, resulting in problematic concerns for aquatic environments, wetland areas, and rice crops (at least in other areas of the world). Finally, the plant, particularly the stems and undersides of leaves, are densely covered with long hairs (Picture 3).

Typically, this weed species is not extremely detrimental to its surrounding environment; however, it has been deemed as invasive in certain areas. Minimal to no information is available on the control of this weed species, but there are several options that should be viable. If possible (which it may not be due to the prevalence in wet areas), tillage would likely be an effective option to kill this weed and reduce the spread. Herbicide options are not extensively studied, but some previous research has indicated auxin herbicides like 2,4-D, dicamba, and MCPA have shown promise at controlling this species. These herbicides should be applied when the weed species is small and actively growing.

To win a prize, be the first to email me at tbutts@uada.edu with the correct common name of this weed species.



Picture 1. Mystery weed species. Photo taken in Desha County, Arkansas along Mississippi River.



Picture 2. Plant and flower of the mystery weed species. Photo taken in Desha County, Arkansas along Mississippi River.



Picture 3. Seeds and hairy stem/leaves of the mystery weed species. Courtesy of Steve Hurst, USDA-NRCS and John Gwaltney, Southeastern Flora.